

Goa and Karnataka: Forts, Temples and Churches

<https://www.kudutravel.com/tours/goa-karnataka-walking-tour>

18 January – 1 February 2019

Our second itinerary in southern India starts with a short stay in Goa, a small state on the western coast, known not just for its sandy beaches along the Arabian Sea coastline, but also for its remarkable heritage of military forts, churches and colonial mansions. For centuries, from the beginning of 16th century until 1961, Goa was a Portuguese territory and the cultural, architectural and culinary influences of this colonial era make this statelet unique within India and, indeed, the world.

After a brief sojourn beside the golden beaches of Goa, we move on to the neighbouring state of Karnataka, crossing the Western Ghats range to reach the Deccan Plateau, with its fertile fields filled with maize; rice; coconut palms; and peanuts. We explore the area known as the Cradle of the Indian civilisation covering Badami, ruled by the Chalukyas; the seat of the Vijayanagar Empire, Hampi, and further south, the Hoysala Dynasty temples in Belur and Halebid. The architecture of these monuments and the skill displayed in the fine sculpting of the native stones are truly awe-inspiring.

Our itinerary includes undemanding walks to observe birds; sloth bears; coffee and spice plantations and waterfalls. In the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, we take a boat trip and a jeep safari, during which we look for river terns; kingfishers; ospreys; deer of various species; elephants and perhaps, if we are fortunate, spot a tiger. Throughout the tour, we are accompanied by an expert naturalist guide who identifies the flora and fauna as we traverse the land in comfortable air-conditioned vehicles.

Itinerary

DAY 1

Brunch, D included

We meet in the early morning at Goa airport and have a 1.5-hour road transfer to our luxury hotel on the coast, where your room will be guaranteed for early check in. Once we have slept and had brunch, we set off to explore Panjim, Goa's capital on the southern bank of the Mandovi river. It was one of the first places occupied by the Portuguese in the 16th century and served as the seat of Portuguese India several times over the centuries. Our walking tour takes us past the Immaculate Conception Church, originally built around 1540, to the picturesque historic quarter of Fontainhas.

DAY 2

B, L, D included

Fort Aguada, occupying the Bardez Peninsula at the confluence of the Mandovi River and the Arabian Sea, was built in 1612 using laterite, the red stone characteristic of many buildings in Goa. We explore this well-preserved monument, consisting of an enormous water cistern, citadel, lighthouse, former jail and a church of St. Lawrence, patron saint of sailors. A short drive inland takes us to Old Goa, with the UNESCO listed late 16th century Basilica Bom Jesus; the 17th century Se Cathedral, considered one of Asia's largest churches, and the atmospheric ruins of the early 17th century Augustinian convent. In the afternoon, we drive (3 hrs.) further inland to Belgaum in Karnataka, where we spend a night in a modern 4-star hotel.

DAY 3

B, L, D included

The history of the Belgaum Fort goes back to the early 13th century, when it was built for the

ruling dynasty. The fort contains Jain and Hindu temples and mosques and is surrounded by a large moat. During India's independence struggle against the British, Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned here. After visiting the fort, we set off for our drive to Badami (3 hrs), a busy small town scenically set by a lake at the bottom of sandstone hills. Our base for the next 3 nights is a traditional 3-star hotel, with a swimming pool set in a lush garden.

DAY 4

B, L, D included

We spend the day in Badami, the capital of the Early Chalukya Dynasty, exploring its sites on foot. The four cave-temples were carved into a sandstone cliff during the 6th and 7th century and are decorated with statues of principal Hindu deities such as Shiva, Vishnu, Ganesha, Parvati or Lakshmi. A path leads us to the hill on the other side of the lake where we visit early free-standing temples of the 7th century and the remains of more recent fortification walls, bee-hive shaped granaries and a water cistern. We walk (3 km.) on to the walled Mahakuta Temple complex, dedicated to Shiva and noted for fine carvings of this deity's half-male half-female form.

DAY 5

B, L, D included

An hour's scenic drive takes us to Aihole, an open-air museum-village, where over a hundred Hindu, Jain and Buddhist temples from 6th – 12th centuries are scattered amongst recently built houses. It can also be described as an early workshop of temple architecture styles. To orientate ourselves, we begin at the horseshoe-shaped Durga Temple. Later we walk through the village taking in, amongst others, the Gaudargudi, imitating wood in stone, or the 6th century rock cut temple, Ravanaphadi. The nearby UNESCO World Heritage Site of Pattadakal was considered a holy place by the Early Chalukyas and coronation ceremonies took place here. As we wander through this relatively compact area with ten temples, we learn how temple art developed in 7th and 8th century.

DAY 6

B, L, D included

Following a 3-hour drive south east, we arrive in Hampi, the former capital of the Vijayanagar Empire on the Tungabhadra River. In the afternoon, we head for the Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary, dedicated to preservation of this little-known insectivorous bear, endemic to the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka. Our hotel for 2 nights is a delightful family-run 4-star hotel featuring spacious rooms, a swimming pool and extensive grounds with a kitchen garden supplying the restaurant.

DAY 7

B, L, D included

Hampi flourished from the mid-14th century for around two hundred years during which it became one of the biggest and richest cities in the world as the religious and commercial centre of the Vijayanagar Empire. It was destroyed and abandoned following the king's capture and death in 1565. We spend the day discovering different areas of this extensive archaeological site, set in a remarkable landscape formed by granite boulders. The Virupaksha Temple, predating the Vijayanagar Empire, is the heart of the Sacred Complex and remains an active site of worship. From here, we walk past the 750-m stone bazaar and along a river path taking in many temples and shrines. A short distance away is the Royal Enclosure with regal halls, elephant stables and water reservoirs.

DAY 8

B, L, D included

A day's drive (6 hrs.) to the hill station town of Chikmagalur in southern Karnataka is punctuated half way by lunch and a walk around the impressive 18th century Chitradurga Fort, straddling several hills, a bastion that British troops feared to conquer. We settle into our 4-star

hotel (3 nights) centred around a colonial era building and set in well-kept ornamental gardens.

DAY 9

B, L, D included

The legend has it that a pilgrim known as Baba Budan smuggled 7 seeds of coffee into India as he returned from the Hajj and sowed them in his garden in the hills near Chikmagalur. That was four centuries ago and today Chikmagalur is one of India's main coffee producing areas. Most of the production comes from small growers with plantations of less than 10 acres, normally inter-cropped with spices such as pepper, cardamom and clove. Our 5-km walk follows a little used road amongst coffee plantations.

DAY 10

B, L, D included

Chronologically, the Hoysala Empire fits between the Chalukya and Vijayanagar Empires. Our first stop today, around 30 km from our hotel, is the 12th century Chennakesava Temple in Belur, the Hoysalas' first capital. The construction of the Hoysaleswara Temple, in nearby Halebid, commenced a few years later in 1121, when Halebid took over as a capital of the Empire. The Hoysala temple architecture is noted for its fine sculptural detail, thanks to the use of steatite (soapstone) which enabled craftsmen to create lace-like carvings with precision and complexity.

DAY 11

B, L, D included

Following a leisurely start, we have a 2-hours' drive to our modest wilderness lodge, with spacious rooms in individual cottages, in the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary. We first drive through an upland area with coffee plantations lining the road and the peaks of the Baba Budan Giri range to our left, before we descend to the fertile plain below. During our late afternoon jeep game drive (2.5 hrs), we look for elephant, sambar, spotted and barking deer, wild boar and one of the reserve's estimated 33 tigers.

DAY 12

B, L, D included

The pre-breakfast 2-hr. boat safari gives us opportunities to observe and learn about the river terns, who have just started to arrive in large numbers to the Bhadra Reservoir to nest before the monsoon arrives in April. Other bird species include osprey, short-toed snake eagle, little cormorant, spot bill duck, black-headed ibis, white-breasted kingfisher and Malabar pied hornbill. We pause at Jog Falls, created by the river Sharavathi dropping 253 m. to form India's second highest waterfall, before continuing to our overnight stop on the coast in Gokarna. We stay in cottages set around an attractive swimming pool in a small resort.

DAY 13

B, L, D included

Gokarna is amongst the most important Hindu pilgrimage centres. As we walk along the main street towards the beach, we see many pilgrims heading for the main Mahabaleshwar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, having cleansed themselves in the sea. By late morning, we are on our way north, passing the naval base in Karwar and across the border into Goa. In the afternoon, we follow a forest trail to an observation platform in the tree canopy (accessed by a ladder) in the Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary. Our last accommodation is a stylish 5-star hotel with excellent service.

DAY 14

B, L, D included

A leisurely morning allows us to make the most of the hotel's facilities, including an infinity pool, spa and a shuttle to the nearby beach. A spice plantation visit presents some of the locally grown spices such as turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves and curry leaves and the

cashew nut, an essential ingredient in Goan cookery, along with an opportunity to buy small presents to take home. Our farewell dinner is in a renowned local restaurant and is followed by a 30-minute airport transfer for early morning flights on **DAY 15**.

Activity Level **Standard**

Mainly short walks (1.5 – 3 hours) most days, with some longer walks offered. Tough trainers or good walking shoes (with a gripping sole) are appropriate.

Temperatures

During January, temperatures are likely to range from 20°C to 30°C during the day. It is considerably cooler on the Deccan Plateau. This is the dry season in the areas we are visiting, but rain showers are always possible in the tropics.

Accommodation

- 1 night in Candolim, in a luxury hotel on the coast, where your room will be guaranteed for early morning check in the night before
- 1 night in Belgaum, in a modern 4-star hotel
- 3 nights in Badami, a traditional 3-star hotel, with a swimming pool set in a lush garden
- 2 nights near Hampi, in a delightful family-run 4-star hotel featuring spacious rooms, a swimming pool and extensive grounds with a kitchen garden supplying the restaurant
- 3 nights near Chikmagalur, in a 4-star hotel centred around a colonial era building and set in well-kept ornamental gardens
- 1 night near the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, in a modest wilderness lodge, with spacious rooms in individual cottages
- 1 night in Gokarna, in cottages set around an attractive swimming pool in a small resort
- 1 night in South Goa, in a stylish 5-star hotel with excellent service

Trip Price, per person sharing

£4,153.25 until 17th April 2018

£4,265.50 until 17th July 2018

£4,377.75 until 17th October 2018

£4,490 after 17th October 2018

<https://www.kudutravel.com/faq#discounts>

£1,140 double for single room supplement

£800 deposit per person

Please note that the single use room supplement is imposed by the hotels and not by Kudu Travel. If you are willing to share but no other suitable guest books on the trip, we regret that the supplement will be payable.

Price Includes

- All accommodation for Days 1 through 14, on a twin shared basis
- All meals with local beer at lunch and dinner (wine occasionally, when available) as listed (Please note that some restaurants in India are strictly alcohol-free – bring some duty free!)
- All land transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles, except during free periods
- jeep and boat safari, as described
- All entrance, National Park and sightseeing fees, except during free periods
- Services of an expert local naturalist guide and a driver throughout, plus our Kudu Travel tour leader
- Services of specialist trackers and guides in National Parks and reserves
- Tips for porters, restaurant and hotel staff and driver (appreciation for your tour leaders is at your discretion)

Price does not Include

- Flights to and from Goa International Airport;
- Trip cancellation, medical or other insurance;
- Immunisations, prescriptions or other medical requirements;
- Passport, visa and health documentation;
- Personal expenses (laundry, alcohol besides beer & occasional wine with group meals, free time activities, etc.);
- Meals noted as excepted in the daily notation;
- Transport and transfer of excess baggage; and
- Indian departure tax, if any.

VALUE FOR MONEY - SO MUCH IS INCLUDED

On Kudu trips, you will only need money for postcards, presents to take home, the odd G & T or an irresistible ice cream. Festival and opera tickets, museum and gallery entrances, National Park fees, all meals (with a very few exceptions specified in individual itineraries), wine with lunch and dinner, access to specialist books carried by the guides, gratuities for porters and hotel and restaurant staff, boat rides, train trips, internal flights, wine tastings, 4WDs with drivers, the services of skilled local guides and trackers etc. are ALL INCLUDED in the cost of your holiday. We are confident that, like previous very satisfied guests, you will discover that our tours give you excellent value for money.

Specialist Guides

Benny Kurian is considered one of India's leading naturalists, with decades of experience exploring the Western Ghats. Amongst his achievements, he has documented sightings of two mammal species thought to have become extinct in the 19th century. This trip is led jointly by Benny and Ruth Hackney, a Cambridge graduate in Oriental Studies.

Off the beaten track

Please be aware that electricity and water supplies may occasionally be erratic, travel arrangements can be disrupted and standards of driving and vehicle maintenance etc. are not set by the British Ministry of Transport. Kudu Travel will endeavour to do everything possible to ensure a smooth-running tour, but please be ready with your sense of humour and tolerance when travelling in the tropics.

Visa and Health Requirements

All visitors require a visa for entry to India and the simplest way to obtain a tourist visa is to apply online on <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/>. The costs start from £60.

Alternatively, a visa can be obtained (for a fee) using visa agencies such as IndiaVisa.co.uk (0870 240 2526, www.indiavisa.co.uk) or Travcour (www.travcour.com, 020 8543 1846).

A Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is not required when arriving from Europe or the USA. Immunisation/boosters against Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid and Polio are recommended. Please consult your doctor in good time about this (**at least 6 weeks before departure**) and the latest situation on malaria prophylaxis and anything else they may recommend.

Insurance

It is essential, and a condition of booking, that you protect yourself with a suitable travel insurance policy as soon as you book this trip. We can arrange comprehensive cover for UK residents. For further details, please see the Kudu website or brochure or ask our office.

Size of Party

This trip will run with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 14 guests.